

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Please cancel claims 7, 13, and 14.

Please add new claims 18 and 19.

1. (Currently Amended) An alignment device to guide the tongue of a trailer toward the hitch ball of a tow vehicle comprising:

a generally horizontal base plate, the base plate comprising a generally flat piece of metal having a hole therein for receiving a hitch ball on a trailer hitch post; and ~~a generally vertical back plate attached to the base plate, an opening for receiving a hitch ball to hold the base plate to a hitch post and engagement means formed in at least one of the base plate and the back plate to engage a hitch post and thereby prevent rotation of the alignment device upon impact with a trailer tongue.~~

a generally vertical back plate, the back plate being formed from a single continuous piece of metal which is bent into a V or U shape, the bottom edge of the back plate being attached to the base plate such that the bottom edge of the back plate extends downwardly past the base plate so as to engage a trailer hitch post and thereby inhibit rotation of the base plate.

2. (Currently Amended) The alignment guide of claim 1, wherein the back plate further comprises a generally rectangular opening formed in the bottom of the back plate, the opening being configured for engaging the hitch post of a vehicle to thereby prevent rotation of the alignment device. ~~engagement means comprises a recessed channel formed in the base plate and configured to engage a hitch post and maintain the orientation of the alignment device by engagement with a hitch post.~~

3. (Currently Amended) The alignment guide of claim 1, wherein the rectangular opening in the back plate extends above the base plate. ~~2, wherein the recessed channel is between 1/4 and 3/4 inches deep.~~

4. (Original) The alignment guide of claim 1, further comprising a cutout in the base plate or back plate configured to receive a hitch post.

5. (Currently Amended) The alignment device of claim 1, wherein the bottom edge of the back plate extends at least 1/2 inch below the base plate. ~~further comprising an aperture formed in the base plate to accommodate the ball of the tow vehicle hitch.~~

6. (Original) The alignment device of claim 1, wherein the back plate is curved so as to partially surround a drop hitch ball and thereby to guide the tongue of a trailer or towed vehicle toward the ball hitch.

7. (Canceled) The alignment device of claim 1, wherein the engagement means comprises a flange which extends downwardly beyond the base plate.

8. (Currently Amended) The alignment device of claim 1, further comprising a plastic covering disposed on the alignment device to inhibit damage to the device. ~~on the base plate.~~

9. (Currently Amended) An alignment device to guide the tongue of a trailer toward the hitch ball of a tow vehicle comprising:

a generally horizontal base plate formed from a single continuous piece of metal and having a hole therein for receiving a hitch ball;

a generally vertical back plate formed from a single continuous piece of metal and bent into a V or U shape, the back plate being attached to the base plate; and  
an opening disposed in the back plate configured for at least partially receiving a hitch post and thereby inhibiting rotation of the alignment device on the hitch post.

~~a flange extending downwardly from at least one of the base plate and the back plate to limit rotation of the alignment device.~~

10. (Original) The alignment guide of claim 9, further comprising a covering to protect the back plate from scratches and small dents.

11. (Original) The alignment guide of claim 10, wherein the covering is constructed out of plastic which is molded to correspond to the shape of the back plate.

12. (Currently Amended) The alignment guide of claim 9, wherein the opening extends below the base plate. ~~flange is between 1/4 and 3/4 of an inch.~~

13. (Canceled) The alignment guide of claim 9, wherein the flange is formed by the back plate.

14. (Canceled) The alignment guide of claim 9, wherein the base plate has a cutout.
15. The alignment device of claim 14, wherein the cutout in the base plate is configured for sliding the base plate under a ball of a ball hitch so as to mount the alignment device without complete removal of the ball hitch.
16. (Currently Amended) ~~An alignment device to guide the tongue of a trailer toward the hitch ball of a tow vehicle comprising:~~  
~~a generally vertical back plate attached to a generally horizontal base plate, the base plate having a channel formed therein for receiving a hitch post.~~ An alignment device to guide the tongue of a trailer toward the hitch ball of a tow vehicle comprising:  
a base plate formed from a piece of metal, the base plate having a front edge and a back edge, wherein the base plate is bent so as to form a channel in the base plate extending from the front edge to the back edge, the channel being configured for receiving the hitch post of a vehicle, and wherein an opening is formed along the channel for receiving a hitch ball; and  
a generally vertical back plate formed from plate steel and bent into a V or U shape, the back plate being attached to the back edge of the base plate so as to extend vertically from the base plate.
17. (Original) The alignment device of claim 16, wherein the channel extends upwardly into the base plate between 1/4 and 3/4 of an inch.

18. (New) The alignment device of claim 16, wherein the device further comprises an opening in the back plate.

19. (New) The alignment device of claim 16, wherein the device further comprises a covering to protect the device from damage.